



PLANNING YOUR WEDDING LITURGY



LEADER'S GUIDE

PLEASE NOTE: This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.

A Message to...

Priests, Deacons and Marriage Preparation Teams

Planning Your Wedding Liturgy is designed for use with couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church. The producers of this program suggest that you lend the video to couples so that they may view it before you begin specific planning for their wedding liturgy. Other possible uses with engaged couples are in parish or diocesan gatherings for marriage preparation. (See page 8). This guide provides instructions for use, summaries of each segment and reproducible handouts which couples can use to help them in planning. This program stresses these key principles:

- A wedding is a symbolic action.
- The heart of a wedding is prayer.
- A Catholic wedding is a liturgical event.
- The couple does the marrying.

When lending the video to engaged couples, retain the guide for your use.

A Message to...

Engaged Couples

Planning Your Wedding Liturgy is designed to give you a firm foundation for planning so that your wedding will be celebrated and remembered as a visible sign of God's faithful love. The producers of this program hope you will take time to watch the video before beginning to make specific decisions about your liturgy. The program offers both general principles and practical ideas. You may want to pause the program between segments and take time to talk with each other about the ideas just presented. This guide contains handouts offering principles to guide your planning, the order of the wedding liturgy, a planning checklist and a prayer for you to pray together. Since the heart of your wedding is *prayer*, this program concludes with a prayer for you to share. Our hope is that you will pray with each other now and throughout your married life.

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Catholic Update Video

Introduction to the Series

Catholic Update Video is a video resource designed for use in the RCIA, catechist formation, sacrament programs for parents, faith-sharing groups, study groups, ministry training and high school religious education. *Catholic Update Video* draws from Catholic life and practice to present a single topic in a “video magazine” format with four distinct segments — story, witness, teaching and musical reflection.

Catholic Update Video has been designed with today’s learner in mind. Its segments are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through story (*story segment*), testimony (*witness segment*) and song (*musical reflection segment*) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (*teaching segment*) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence.

- Each program begins with a *story segment* designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life-experience to the faith-topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the *witness segment* helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.

- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the *teaching segment*. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. (This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.)
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the *musical reflection segment*.

The program's host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence might wish to prepare their own lead-in. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

Planning Your Wedding Liturgy

How to Use this Program: A Guide for Priests, Deacons and Marriage Preparation Teams

Prior to using the program, be sure to preview the entire video. Use the segment summaries provided in this guide to refresh your memory of the program's contents before meeting with couples to plan their wedding liturgies.

At the same time you give the couples this video program to view, also provide them with photocopies of the following planning aides, found elsewhere in this guide. You have the permission of the producers to reproduce these handouts. (On a typical photocopier, enlarging the pages 125% should produce a copy that will fit on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper.)

1. **Wedding Liturgy Planning Sheet for Couples** (p. 13 of this guide). This contains questions that will help the couple build a solid foundation for their wedding liturgy. It invites them to consider choices that express the principles emphasized in this program.
2. **Order of the Wedding Liturgy** (p. 14 of this guide). This sheet helps the couple understand the flow of the liturgy.
3. **Wedding Liturgy Planning Sheet for Clergy** (p. 15 of this guide). This sheet will be filled out by the couple and then given to the priest/deacon who will witness their wedding. On it the couple indicates their choices and preferences for their wedding liturgy.
4. **Engaged Couple's Prayer** (p. 16 of this guide). This prayer can be prayed by the couple throughout their preparation for marriage.

5. Copies of applicable parish guidelines about music selections, photography restrictions, etc.

Instruct the engaged couple to watch this video program together in preparation for making decisions about their wedding liturgy. Ask them to fill out the Wedding Liturgy Planning Sheets (“for Couples” is to be completed *after* viewing the video and *before* completing “for Clergy”). They should bring these planning sheets and any other necessary information when they return the video at their next session.

Optional Group Uses

This video, as a whole or in part, may also be used with groups in a variety of settings:

- diocesan or parish wedding liturgy planning programs for engaged couples;
- high school marriage class (*story segment*);
- helping couples plan convalidations; and
- training those who work in marriage preparation, e.g., sponsor couples.

When a facilitator is using this video as part of a larger program, it may be desirable to use the segments individually or in a different order than they appear on the program.

Segment Summaries

Story Segment

An engaged couple comes to the parish office to meet with the priest to plan their wedding liturgy. While they wait for the priest to finish with an earlier appointment, they talk about the questions they hope to have answered at this meeting. As they talk together, we see some of the deeper issues behind their conversation emerge in flashback — the fears, hopes and questions they have about being married. Viewers see the links between the wedding liturgy and the couple's relationship. We begin to see that the ritual action is symbolic of who we are.

Concerns about

- lifelong commitment,
- time for friends and personal interests,
- family acceptance, and
- future uncertainties and opportunities (e.g., relocating for a job)

are brought out through their reflections. It is obvious that the engaged couple in the story is not just planning a wedding day but is preparing for a life together. Their questions about their wedding liturgy reveal concerns and some unresolved issues about their future life as a married couple.

Witness Segment

Two couples talk about their wedding liturgies with Father Tom Richstatter, O.F.M. Both couples, Amy and Bob, and Leona and Marco, thoughtfully planned their wedding liturgies. They talk about some of the fond memories they have of these important events. Some of

the points they make by giving examples from their own weddings follow.

- Praying together is the best start to married life.
- The choice of songs, prayers and Scripture readings can convey special meaning and help everyone to actively participate.
- The bride and groom confer the sacrament on each other. It is their wedding. Examples given that illustrate this are:
 1. greeting guests and inviting them to pray with the couple,
 2. saying their vows from memory and facing the assembly,
 3. incorporating cultural traditions that are meaningful to the couple, and
 4. making suggestions to the priest about what to include in the homily.
- Weddings are about being a *couple*. Examples given that illustrate this are:
 1. attendants come down the aisle as couples and
 2. bride and groom are escorted down the aisle by both parents.
- Some secular customs can get in the way. One couple regrets their concern about the bride not being seen by the groom before the wedding. They now wish that they had greeted their guests upon entry to the church and taken pictures before the ceremony to allow more time with their guests at the reception.

Teaching Segment

Images that comes to mind when the word *wedding* is mentioned vary. When Father Tom, our teacher for this segment, hears the word *wedding*, the image that comes to his mind looks a lot like Sunday Mass at a parish. He sees a wedding as a prayer event, a liturgical celebration, a sacrament. He offers engaged couples some insights to help them build a firm foundation for their wedding ceremony so that their wedding will be celebrated and remembered as a visible sign of God's faithful love. Father Tom's key points are:

- *The heart of your wedding is prayer.* Marriage is difficult. We need God's help. That's why we begin married life in church, in prayer.
- *A Catholic wedding is liturgical prayer.* The liturgy makes Christ visible to the community. Use this as a guide in selecting songs and ceremonies.
 1. Begin with a liturgical procession, including priest, servers, readers, parents of the bride and groom as well as the attendants and bride and groom.
 2. Include a gathering hymn that draws the whole congregation together in prayer.
 3. Plan your liturgy so that there is no *audience*. Everyone present should be a participant, a do-er, a pray-er.
- *Marriage is a sacrament you confer.*
 1. What you do and say should make clear to everyone present that the bride and groom are the active ministers of the sacrament.
 2. Where you stand (facing the congregation) and how you say your vows should make it clear that you are the ones conferring the sacrament.

3. Every sacrament involves a gift. Your gift to us is the sign of God's love for us in your love for one another. This is a gift to be shared with the entire parish community.

Musical Reflection Segment

Just as the heart of a wedding liturgy is prayer, so should the heart of every Christian marriage be prayer. The video provides a prayer for the engaged couple to pray together, accompanied with music and images. A copy of the prayer can be found on page 16 of this guide. It may be photocopied for distribution to engaged couples. They should be encouraged to pray this throughout their preparation for their marriage.

WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING SHEET FOR COUPLES

Complete this planning sheet *after* viewing the video and *before* completing the planning sheet for clergy. The choices suggested here reflect the principles that precede them but do not reflect all possible options. Check all of the elements that you want to include in your wedding liturgy.

A Catholic Wedding Is a Liturgical Prayer

We will:

- provide a participation aid (program) that includes words to responses, songs and prayers we want our guests to say together; when to sit and stand, etc.
- invite our guests to pray with us by actively participating ourselves and by:
 - personal invitation after the entrance procession.
 - including a note in the participation aid.
- begin with a liturgical procession that includes priest, servers, readers, attendants and parents with the bride and groom.
- include a gathering hymn that draws the congregation together in prayer.
- choose good readers to proclaim the Scriptures and read the general intercessions (prayer of the faithful).

We Do the Marrying

We will:

- greet our guests at the door of the church, after the entrance procession.
- say our vows from memory facing the congregation.
- offer a couple's prayer after the vows and exchange of rings.
- offer a prayer of thanksgiving at the end of the ceremony.

Our Wedding Is a Symbolic Action

We will:

- celebrate our wedding at a Mass, outside of Mass. (*Couples from different faith backgrounds will need to discuss this choice with their priest or deacon to learn what is appropriate to their situation.*)
- seat guests throughout the church without segregating between bride and groom's sides.
- have attendants enter the church as couples.
- each process in with both parents.
- include traditional ethnic symbols connected to our family heritage.

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ORDER OF THE WEDDING LITURGY

The wedding liturgy is patterned on the central sacrament Catholics celebrate—the Eucharist. The basic structure of the Eucharist gives shape to the wedding liturgy even when the wedding is celebrated outside of a Mass.

A. Gathering (Gathering Rite)

Entrance Procession
Gathering Hymn
Welcome

B. Storytelling (Liturgy of the Word)

First Reading (Old Testament)
Responsorial Psalm
(psalm response should be sung whenever possible)
Second Reading (New Testament)
Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia except in Lent)
Gospel (read by priest or deacon)
Homily (offered by priest or deacon)

C. Rite of Marriage

Statement of Intentions
Consent (Exchange of Vows)
Blessing and Exchange of Rings
General Intercessions (Prayer of the Faithful)

D. Meal Sharing (Liturgy of the Eucharist)

- Preparation of the Gifts
- Holy, Holy
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Memorial Acclamation
- Eucharistic Prayer (conclusion)
- Great Amen
- Lord's Prayer
- Nuptial Blessing
- Sign of Peace
- Communion

E. Turning Out to the World (Commissioning)

Final Blessing
Recessional

- These elements are not included in a liturgy outside of Mass. In the case of a liturgy outside of Mass, the Nuptial Blessing precedes the Lord's Prayer.

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WEDDING LITURGY PLANNING SHEET FOR CLERGY

Priest/Deacon _____

Wedding Liturgy of _____ and _____

Date/Time of Wedding _____

Date/Time of Rehearsal _____

Musicians _____

A. Gathering Rite

Entrance Procession participants and lineup _____

Gathering Hymn _____

Welcome prepared by _____

given by _____

B. Liturgy of the Word

First Reading _____

read by _____

reason we chose this reading: _____

Responsorial Psalm _____

recited, sung, leader _____

Second Reading _____

read by _____

reason we chose this reading: _____

Gospel Acclamation _____

recited, sung, leader _____

Gospel _____

read by (priest/deacon) _____

reason we chose this reading: _____

Homily (suggestions) _____

C. Rite of Marriage

where the couple will stand: _____

Exchange of Vows:

memorize, read, repeat after priest

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

General Intercessions

written by _____

read by _____

D. Liturgy of the Eucharist

• Procession with the Gifts:

participants _____

• Holy, Holy: recited, sung

• Eucharistic Prayer

• Memorial Acclamation: recited, sung

• Great Amen: recited, sung

Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

• Sign of Peace

• Communion: both forms

for bride and groom only, for all

• Prayer After Communion

E. Commissioning

Final Blessing

Recessional

• These elements are not included in a liturgy outside of Mass. In the case of a liturgy outside of Mass, the Nuptial Blessing precedes the Lord's Prayer.

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Engaged Couple's Prayer

Woman:

Loving God,
we are here together to recognize that you are the source of all life and all love.
You've helped us to find each other
and you've created the love we share together as a precious gift.

We celebrate this love with our families and friends and we cherish it as your gift,
not just to lock away for safekeeping,
but to share with the world through the witness of our marriage.
Help us to reflect to others your goodness and love
and to be signs of caring in a world that needs to learn more about love.

Man:

Loving God,
we entrust to each other and to you our future together.
Walk with us as a partner in our relationship.
Hear us voice our hopes, our dreams, our fears.
When there are moments of doubt or weakness, give us strength through one another.
When there are challenges and risks, give us courage to walk as one.
When there are gifts of joy and wonder, give us a lively spirit to celebrate with a united heart.

Both:

Loving God,
keep us continually open to the gift of life,
for you call us to be partners with you in creating new life.
Keep us faithful to one another,
for you are ever-faithful to us, your people.
Keep us committed to each other for all our days,
for you have promised to be with us forever in Jesus, your Son,
whose sacrifice of love models self-giving for us,
whose relationship with the Church we seek to imitate,
and in whose name we will pledge our love on our wedding day.
Amen.

Additional Resources

Scripture

Scripture readings that are suggested for use in the wedding liturgy give us insight into the many facets of married life and the relationship of the love of husband and wife to God's love for us.

Old Testament: Genesis 1:26-28, 31a; Genesis 2:18-24; Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67; Tobit 7:9-10, 11-15; Tobit 8:5-10; Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16a, 8:6-7a; Ecclesiasticus 26:1-4, 16-21; Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34a.

New Testament: Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39; Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; I Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20; I Corinthians 12:31-13:8a; Ephesians 5:2a, 21-33; Colossians 3:12-17; I Peter 3:1-9; I John 3:18-24; I John 4:7-12; Revelation 19:1, 5-9a; Matthew 5:1-12; Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 7:21, 24-29; Matthew 19:3-6; Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 10:6-9; John 2:1-11; John 15:9-12; John 15:12-16; John 17:20-26.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The *Catechism* addresses the Sacrament of Matrimony in 1601-1666.

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